

The Smart Move:

A Military Relocation Workbook

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Relocation Basics:

Answers to Key Family Questions

Making Moving Manageable

Members of the armed forces and their families know that Permanent Change of Station (PCS) is a fact of military life. But it can be a challenge to leave one place and settle into another for service members and their families. Fortunately, the military recognizes this and does quite a bit to help families get assistance for service-related moves, including referrals for programs that may not be available through the armed forces. This chapter outlines services available to military members and their families who plan to relocate and covers what the military offers to help make the transition as smooth as possible.

Where Will We Live?

The installation's housing office is the best place to inquire about permanent or temporary housing. In most cases, if you will be living on base, you will have already been assigned a residence upon arrival, if not before. If you plan to live off base, the housing office can help you secure temporary quarters on base until you find a place to live.

None of My Belongings Have Arrived — What Can I Do?

Many Relocation Offices stock a loan closet for travelers whose belongings do not arrive at the same time they do. Families can borrow household items ranging from irons and other small appliances to furniture and toys for children. Inquiry calls can be made to the installation's Relocation Office.

Where Can I Find Child Care at Our New Installation?

Thanks to the Military Child Care Act (MCCA) of 1989, families can expect high-quality care at installations throughout the world. Military installations, following guidelines outlined by the Department of Defense (DoD), offer three options for child care. The DoD sets the standards for care, then each installation, depending upon the need, determines how the services will be developed. Options include full-time day care provided through the base's Child Development Center (CDC); in-home Family Child Care (FCC) provided by military dependents who live on base; and hourly child care, offered through both the CDCs and FCCs. Most CDCs offer full- and part-time care (up to 50 hours per week) as well as extended hours. All providers must be licensed and receive approval to operate from the base command.

To ensure that all families who need child care have access to it, the DoD sets uniform fees at CDCs around the world. Fees are determined by total family income, but parents may be able to negotiate rates with FCC providers. Referrals for child care are provided through the CDC, Community Service Office or the Family Support Center, depending upon the branch of service.

I Don't Know the Area. Where Can I Find a Job?

The military offers services to help spouses and dependents locate jobs on and off base. Many installations have what are known as "military friendly" contacts with local employers. These employers, for example, might give application preference to dependents. The base's Relocation Office can direct you to such companies and explain the protocol for job application.

In addition, the installation's Employment Assistance Program offers various services designed to help military dependents prepare for a successful job search. These programs include preparation for assessing job skills, developing a job search strategy, writing a resume and cover letter and, building interviewing skills.

What Should I Do About Moving My Pets?

Animals require specific preparation and special care before, during, and after a move. The method you choose for transporting your pet will be determined by whether you will be relocating domestically or internationally, and how you plan to travel. Of course you will want to ensure that your pet experiences the least amount of trauma and discomfort during transport.

Tip 1: You may wish to ask a friend to watch your pet(s) while you are packing. Like children, pets can become confused, even agitated, when their surroundings are changed, and some may even become physically ill.

Tip 2: If you are transporting a pet across state lines within the contiguous United States, you will need a record of your pet's inoculations as well as a health history. This can be obtained from your current veterinarian's office. These records become your pet's "travel papers." When you arrive in your new city, this documentation enables you to register your pet with local animal services.

Tip 3: If you are making an overseas move, or going to Hawaii, be aware that most countries have a quarantine period for animals. Quarantine to protect against the spread of disease that some animals bring from their country of origin. During the quarantine period, pets generally stay in a facility for observation; quarantine periods can last up to a year. Some cities, states or countries may also limit the number of pets you can have, and most will require registration and licensure of the animal. Your Relocation Office can provide details.

Tip 4: If you will be traveling by airplane, make sure your pet will not be cooped up longer or more uncomfortably than necessary. If your pet is small enough, it may be able to fly on board with you in a special container. However, most pets are transported in the cargo area. It's advantageous to:

- Choose nonstop flights to avoid lay overs and plane changes.
- Make sure the kennel or crate used to transport your animal allows ample room for your pet to sit, stand and turn around.

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- Make sure the nature of other cargo will not pose any threat to your animal.
 - Have your pet examined by a veterinarian before you take it in an airplane or to another country.

What Are DODDS and DDESS?

In most if not all cases, military dependents living overseas will attend one of the 160 Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDSs). DoDDSs are open to all military dependents. Overseas, military installations either have a DoDDS or have access to one. Children of active duty military members receive priority enrollment status.

In the United States, an installation may have what is called a Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary or Secondary School (DDESS). There are approximately 60 DDESSs in the United States. Children may attend a DDESS rather than a public school when their installation is far from the school, making the commute a hardship. This is often the case in more rural, undeveloped areas.

For more information about these schools, contact your new installation's education office before your move. Or, if you have access to a computer, you can explore its web site at www.dodea.edu. You will find details about school locations, addresses, individual school web sites as well as reports on each school district's academic ratings and test scores.

Are There Other Things I Can Do to Simplify My Family's Move?

Before your move, make it a point to visit your Relocation Office to research information about your new home. This is, after all, a big adventure, and what better way to make an adventure exciting and educational than to do a little research. The Relocation Office offers a wealth of information about the many military installations worldwide and their surrounding communities. The more time you take to plan your move, and to learn as much as you can about your new home, the smoother your transition will go. That's why it's a good idea to visit your current Relocation Office as soon as you receive your transfer orders.

The Complete Relocation Checklist



A Successful Move from Start to Finish

As any military member already knows, PCSing has the capacity to turn life as you know it completely upside down. While exciting adventures await at your new destination, the ease with which you settle in depends in great part on what you do before you even begin packing your current residence.

Organization is the key to a successful relocation. But for the many people who move each year, staying organized during the moving process is one of life's greatest challenges. One of the reasons it's so difficult to keep your external world (sorting, packing, storing belongings, throwing away junk) organized is because relocation forces your internal world (and your family's as well) into a total frenzy. The bottom line is that it's hard to be organized on the outside when you feel so disorganized on the inside.

Checklists are a useful way to keep the moving process organized and are, in fact, the blueprints of organization to let you know what has to be done. This chapter provides a checklist that military personnel and their families can use to help prepare for a successful, stress-free relocation.

Take an Inventory of Your Possessions, Then Throw Things Out

Moving is a great excuse to get rid of all the junk you wish you had gotten rid of the last time you moved! A good rule of thumb is that if you haven't had a use for it, worn it, looked at it, read it, or played with it for at least two years chances are slim that you'll want to again.

Helpful hint: Donate gently used items to a local charity or to your base's loan closet (located in the Relocation Office). Many charities have a home pick-up service, so all you have to do is arrange a date. Pass plants and container flower gardens on to friends.

Have I sorted through all of the following?

- ☐ Clothing
- ☐ Toys/stuffed animals
- ☐ Sporting goods
- ☐ Pots, pans, and kitchen utensils
- ☐ Furniture
- ☐ Books/magazines
- ☐ Picture frames
- ☐ Electronic equipment
- ☐ Art/hobby supplies

Let's Sort Things Out for Packing

Once you've identified which boxes belong to whom, how do you know which contain items that will be crucial in the early stages of settling in? Instead of opening every single carton to find your grandmother's quilt, your daughter's soccer shoes or any military-issued items you might need, color-code boxes to determine which should be opened first. For example, if you are moving to a tropical climate from a cold climate, tag boxes of summer clothes, sporting goods, and other summer supplies in red for priority unpacking. Tag items you'd use in colder climates in blue, and so on.

Helpful hint: You can use stickers, self-adhesive labels or a magic marker to do the job.

It simplifies packing, unpacking and storage. Mark all sides of each box so, no matter where it is, you won't have to free it completely to know its contents.

Have I packed all of the following?

- ☐ Extra school clothing
- ☐ Summer/winter clothing
- ☐ Seasonal sports gear
- ☐ Towels/bedding
- ☐ Necessary appliances/electronics
- ☐ Craft/hobby materials
- ☐ Reading materials
- ☐ Treasured knick knacks
- ☐ Toys

Do I have the following important documents and other items organized for safe transport?

- ☐ Birth certificates
- ☐ Passports
- ☐ Transfer orders
- ☐ Insurance verification
- ☐ Medications
- ☐ Inoculation records

Perfect Packing

Packing up a house takes organization and planning. Once you have sorted your belongings and thrown away the things you no longer want, it's time to pack.

Helpful hint: First, pack the items that you do not plan to use before you leave. Pack the things you use every day last.

Do I have all the supplies I need for packing?

- ☐ Boxes: obtain from markets, liquor stores or local moving companies
- ☐ Crates: obtain from markets, liquor stores
- ☐ Wardrobe carton for clothes: obtain from local moving companies
- ☐ Old newspaper for protecting fragile items from breakage
- ☐ Labels and magic markers
- ☐ Strapping tape: secure boxes top and bottom
- ☐ Dolly: wheel items onto truck
- ☐ Moving truck: local or cross-country self-moving

Change Your Address

For greater efficiency and organization, make address changes prior to moving.

Helpful hint: After you arrive in your new home, call and verify that all important contacts have your new address and new telephone number.

Have I notified important contacts of our new address?

- ☐ Get change of address forms from post office.
- ☐ Send change of address forms to businesses, agencies and other public and private organizations.
- ☐ Notify friends and family members that you will be moving.

Cancel Subscriptions

Be sure to cancel subscriptions. Leave enough time to verify that delivery has been halted. If you choose to continue your subscriptions to magazines or book clubs, inform them of your change of address.

Helpful hint: Wait until you arrive in your new home (even if you already have a forwarding permanent address) before ordering new subscriptions.

Have I canceled the following subscriptions?

- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Magazines
- ☐ Book club
- ☐ Cable TV
- ☐ Online access
- ☐ CD/music club
- ☐ Mail-order catalogs

Get Your Records in Order

Moving probably means you'll have to open a new bank account and apply for a new driver's license if you move out of state. Decide who needs to be notified about your move so that coverage, payment or any other type of business is not interrupted while you are traveling to your new home.

Helpful hint: Establish a relationship with a representative from the companies that handle your loans, policies, etc., and stay in touch with them throughout your move to ensure that no unforeseen problems arise that cannot be dealt with right away.

Have I made appropriate payment or other arrangements for the following?

- ☐ Credit cards
- ☐ Medical records
- ☐ Insurance policies
- ☐ Banks and financial records
- ☐ Auto payments

Cancel Utility Services and Pay Final Bills

Within a week or two of moving, cancel and get final readings on your household utilities. Make sure all bills are paid before leaving your old home. If you live off base, this may mean canceling household services.

Helpful hint: Ask for a final statement and receipt of payment of final bill to be mailed to your new address.

Have I canceled the following services?

- ☐ Water company
- ☐ Electric company
- ☐ Natural gas company
- ☐ Trash/waste services
- ☐ Other maintenance fees
- ☐ Home telephone
- ☐ Cellular phone

You Can Take It With You

The following items are a must to ensure a peaceful relocation experience and to help you feel settled in your new home.

Helpful hint: Try to get these things in order before you leave.

Can I locate the following moving necessities?

- ☐ Keys
- ☐ Address book
- ☐ Telephone directory (from city you are leaving)
- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Moving documents
- ☐ Household valuables inventory

Do Some Research on Your New Home

Contact the Relocation Office on the base to which you are transferred and ask a staff member to recommend the best place to get information about your new home. Since some transition offices are better equipped than others, ask for the telephone number of the local chamber of commerce and/or tourist bureau offices for more detailed information about what your new community has to offer.

Helpful hint: Don't wait until your departure day to familiarize yourself with your home-to-be; do it as soon as you or your family member gets the PCS order.

Relocation Finances



PCSing can be stressful, not only mentally, but financially as well. A PCS cost study conducted in 1999 found that on average a service member spends \$1,952 over what they are reimbursed when making a move from outside the continental United States (OCONUS) to inside the continental United States (CONUS). But there are many things you can do to financially plan for and manage your move. It can be helpful to meet with the Financial Readiness Manager and visit the Relocation Office for assistance.

Entitlements

There are many travel and pay entitlements that are available to service members who are PCSing. Some are listed below, but there may be others available to you. Check with your Transportation Office for further information.

Per Diem Allowance

Per Diem Allowance reimburses service members for expenses incurred while traveling. A daily allowance is given for the service member and each of their dependents. The number of travel days is calculated by allowing for one travel day per 350 miles traveled.

Temporary Lodging Expenses

Temporary Lodging Expenses help cover the cost of food and housing while a service member and their family are living in temporary housing, in the continental United States.

Temporary Lodging Assistance

Temporary Lodging Assistance is paid to help cover food and housing while awaiting permanent housing.

Dislocation Allowance

Dislocation Allowance helps cover any miscellaneous expenses associated with moving.

Monetary Allowance in Lieu of Transportation

Mileage is paid to service members and their families when they are driving to their new station. Rates vary depending on which branch of the military you serve in.

Advance Basic Allowance for Housing

This advance on a service member's monthly pay provides assistance in paying for off-base housing.

Move-In Housing Allowance

Applicable only for an overseas move, this disbursement is paid to help cover expenses associated with making a home ready to live in.

Advance Pay

Advance Pay is a loan against a service member's future earnings.

Expenses Worksheet

Use the worksheet below to help keep track of your expenses. Blank spaces have been provided so that you can fill in any expenses you may incur that aren't listed below.

Remember, when choosing a new place to live it is important to compare cost of living—from where you live now to where you will be moving. That way you can plan if your expenses will go up or down. Also keep detailed records of your moving expenses because you may be eligible for reimbursements for many of them.

Monthly Expenses	Existing Residence	Expected at New Home
Rent	_____	_____
Electric/Gas	_____	_____
Phone	_____	_____
Cable/Internet	_____	_____
Car payments	_____	_____
Insurance	_____	_____

Monthly Expenses

	Existing Residence	Expected at New Home
Food	_____	_____
Clothing	_____	_____
Entertainment	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Moving Expenses

Supplies (boxes, tape, etc.)	_____	Food	_____
Gas	_____	Lodging	_____
Moving Company	_____	Other	_____

Savings Worksheet

Use the worksheet below to help create a savings goal and a plan to meet that goal.

Savings Goal

I want to save _____ in the next _____ (enter time-frame).

How much do I have to save each month to meet this goal? _____ Can I afford to save this much? _____ If not, what expenses can I cut to help meet this goal?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Tips to help you save:

- ☐ Eat out less often. Brown bag your lunch.
- ☐ Have some of your paycheck direct-deposited into a savings account.
- ☐ Cancel any unused subscriptions—magazines, book or CD clubs.
- ☐ Cut up your credit cards.
- ☐ Consolidate loans. Look for lower interest rates on credit cards or car loans.

Relocation:

Family Feelings and Fears



Moving: An Unexpected Opportunity for Growth

The process of uprooting an entire home can be an exciting, yet stressful experience for any family. Parents have to worry about all the logistics: moving belongings, settling into a new home and helping the rest of the family adjust to their new environment. Kids are usually focused on leaving old friends and the anxiety that often comes from having to find their place in a new school.

This chapter helps families recognize the challenges, emotions and frustrations that arise during a PCS and explains how to turn this experience into an opportunity for growth. While moving can be as exciting as any other big event in our lives, it forces us to manage a lot of changes at the same time.

Military family members may come to expect the notice for transfer but that doesn't mean they ever really get used to it or entirely like it. That's why many family members' first reaction to an upcoming move may be negative. It helps to look at the process of moving in terms of endings and beginnings, in that order. Moving is unique in that we must go through the pain and sadness of separation, leaving old friends and family, and sometimes beloved surroundings, before we ever get to see our new home.

Moving is a loss. That's why it's common to experience feelings of sadness at having to say good-bye, anger at not choosing when you get to move or where, and denial at having to move yet again. It's important to acknowledge these feelings because they are natural and to be expected. Only by acknowledging them can we allow these feelings to give way to acceptance, peace and even some excitement about starting anew.

It's Perfectly Natural: Adjustments Take Time

Adjustment to a new home and community often happens in stages. First we meet people, then we make friends, then we become involved in activities that interest us. As we ease into a new routine, we quickly find that we are able to accept and like what our new community has to offer, even if it differs greatly from our prior home.

Still, family members may find an upcoming move challenging if the last move was not that long ago or if the current move was unexpected. Remember, the act of moving—uprooting from a place of comfort and familiarity—triggers a sense of loss and deeper feelings of a loss of control over one's life. This is especially true for children and teenagers who may not always have the words or understanding to manage their feelings, fears and anxieties.

It's important that parents be aware of their child's reaction to the news of moving, talk to their child about it, and seek help if the child:

- Refuses to talk about moving
- Appears depressed or agitated
- Can't sleep at night
- Does not want to go to school
- Refuses to tell others about the move
- Exhibits behaviors that are out of the ordinary

These are not uncommon reactions but may lead to difficulties if not addressed. Though it may be difficult to know when to seek help, it's best to explore problems before they become too serious. Contact your installation's Family Support Center if you or someone you love needs more support than you are able to give in coping with relocation.

Share Your Experience with Those You Love

Children and teenagers take some comfort in hearing their parents reveal their own feelings about moving. While you certainly won't want to dwell on disappointments and negative feelings, it can be very helpful to let your child know that you share his or her feelings: sad, angry, disappointed and anxious as well as excited and happy about moving. Talking about your feelings and explaining what you've done to help yourself feel more comfortable with the move gives children perspective and some healthy, concrete behaviors to model.

Helping Children Find Meaning in Moving

Young people will have many questions about moving, and some will be easier to answer than others. Probably the most difficult questions are the ones that really have no answer, short of the fact that at certain times in a military career relocations do occur. It's important to keep in mind that when children raise questions like "Why do we have to move again?" "Why do we have to go, I like it here?" or "Why does this always happen to us?", they are looking for you to provide a deeper meaning to these questions that will calm their fears about leaving a familiar place, rather than a concrete answer.

Consider their questions as opportunities to share your views on the benefits and opportunities of moving but also to address their concerns, which are really about leaving a familiar place for an unknown place.

Talking About Relocation with Your Family

One of the best ways to relieve fears and anxieties about moving is to explain the process of moving, including what will take place, and when. Children often require details to be repeated because it helps them absorb and process the events once they take place. It may also help to encourage children to talk to other children on base who have recently moved, or who have been through moves in the past. In addition:

- Consider the child's point of view when you answer questions.
- Give children ways to be involved. This enables them to experience some feeling of control.

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- Allow your children to pack their own belongings.
 - Encourage children to write down their feelings about moving and to share them with you.
 - Talk with your children about moving on a daily basis, especially as moving day draws near.

Helping Your Family Overcome Fears of Relocation

One of the most difficult parts about helping your child adjust to the move is keeping your own fears and apprehensions in check when talking to your children. Be aware of your feelings and take time to talk to a friend or your spouse or seek support on base.

It's natural for your children's fears and worries to trigger your own, and when this happens, it's common to want to talk about it with someone. However, do not confide your deepest fears to your children or teenager. Though this seems obvious, many parents, when under stress, may turn to their child for comfort without even realizing it. But hearing a parent's worries over and over again is difficult for children and is not appropriate parent-child behavior. Other ways to help your child overcome apprehensions include:

- Practicing positive self-talk about meeting the new children at school or on base.
- Role-playing with your child about how to behave in new situations.
- Reading up on the new community and deciding on activities to do together once you arrive.
- Reminding children of their past successes adjusting to new situations.

Transferring to a New School:

Tips for Parents and Kids



A New School, a New Life

Moving to a new school presents many academic and social challenges. Leaving one school and entering another takes courage, even for a child who has already lived through several of their family's military transfers. This chapter offers practical tips to help children and teens enjoy a smooth transition to their new school.

Tip #1: Get Familiar with the School Before You Begin

Give children as many details as possible about the new school and community. This may take some effort but will pay off when the child enters the new learning environment with a heightened sense of what things will be like, what things will be the same, and what will be different.

Write or call the new school and ask them to mail you information about:

- School size
- Class size
- Start time and end time
- After school activities and clubs
- Sports teams
- Special learning programs
- Subjects covered by grade
- Physical description of the school
- Cafeteria and recess facilities
- Percentage of military youth enrolled
- Contact names

Tip #2: Visit the New School Before Your Child's First Day

Whether your children enroll on the official first day of school or midyear, give them the opportunity to view the school, walk around the grounds and visit the neighborhood before their first day of school to help them feel more in control. Some schools even give tours to new students.

Spots to show your child might include:

- Bus stops
- Cafeteria
- Administrative offices
- Classrooms
- Nurse's office

Tip #3: Help Your Child Establish Ways to Stay in Touch with Old Friends

A lot of anxiety about changing schools stems from the uncertainty of not knowing if it will be possible to maintain contact with old friends. Helping children figure out ways to keep old friendships alive helps them adjust to their new situation. It takes the stress and frustration out of wondering whether they'll be able to stay in touch with their old friends so they can concentrate their energy on adjusting to their new school and developing friendships there.

Tip #4: Encourage Children to Talk to Their Teachers

The more a child gets to know his or her teachers, the better able the child will be to ask for help if schoolwork becomes overwhelming or difficult. If your children are in middle school or high school, suggest that they talk individually to teachers at least once a week to discuss upcoming projects, a particular lesson, or what to do if they are having difficulties with a certain subject.

Tip #5: Talk to Kids About Their Experiences

Many parents are cautious about discussing the old school and the new school, concerned that any comparisons will render the new school unfavorable especially if the child is having difficulty adjusting to the move. Allowing your child to talk, and vent frustrations about his or her new learning environment can be a wonderful experience for your family and a great help to your child. By listening to your child's point of view, you may be able to help him or her understand the reasons for these frustrations and deal with them appropriately.

Remember that children respond to encouragement and sincerity. That's why it helps them to hear your objective observations regarding their success with the school transition. Objective and supportive feedback by parents can do wonders for a child's self-esteem. It is also can be an effective way to help children gain confidence in their ability to handle any difficult challenge.

Here are some ideas for what to say to a child that is both supportive and objective:

- "Since we moved, I've noticed that you've become more enthusiastic about science. I think that's wonderful. What's made the difference for you?"
- "I'm so happy to see you drawing again. I know that's something you always enjoyed. Why don't you create a collection of your drawings? I'd like to help you put them in a book if that's okay with you."
- "I'm so proud of the way you volunteered to help other students at your school who are having trouble learning. You really have a gift for reaching out to help others."

Tip #6: Encourage Your Child to Join Clubs, Activities and Sports

The best way to meet people who share your interests is to participate in activities you enjoy. The same holds true for children. Younger children can join scout troops, on-base boys and girls clubs, arts and crafts lessons, and team sports. Teenagers can join school service clubs, participate in volunteer work or try out for team sports or academic clubs.

Tip #7: Help Your Child Set Goals

Looking ahead, but not too far ahead, is an important part of settling into a new environment. Encourage your child to set manageable, realistic goals. For example, perhaps your child wants to make new friends but feels awkward about approaching a new group. You might encourage the child to start out by setting a goal of saying “hello” to 10 new people during his or her first week. Then suggest he or she join a club or participate in an extracurricular activity to increase contact with others and begin to feel part of the community.

Tip #8: If Schoolwork Is Tough, Talk to Teachers Immediately

Kids shouldn’t wait until they are completely overwhelmed to talk to their teachers. Remember, new teachers are not familiar with your child’s academic abilities, but they’ll learn fast and be willing to help if there is a problem. Try to make contact with them from the beginning.

Create a communication system with teachers so they can quickly relay progress reports. You might request a note be sent home on Fridays, for example, outlining your child’s progress for the week. Ask the teacher to include suggestions regarding how work can be improved and work with your child accordingly.

As your child’s schoolwork improves, you may wish to cut down on the frequency of these notes.

Tip #9: Making the Most of Department of Defense Schools

Even if your child attends a Department of Defense Dependents School (DODDS) overseas, or a Department of Defense Elementary and Secondary School (DDESS) in the United States, and you are confident of their education, you should make a point of getting to know your child’s teacher(s) and stay abreast of his or her lesson plans. Knowing what subjects your child has studied in previous schools can be useful for placement purposes if your child must transfer midyear.

Relocating Overseas:

Your Adventure Abroad



An Overseas Adventure for Your Family Is About to Begin

An international move is something most Americans, at one time or another, dream about. As part of the military community, you and your family may be among the lucky ones selected to experience the excitement and cultural diversity of living abroad.

The military offers a lot of assistance for families PCSing: where you will be stationed, housing, places to shop initially (commissaries, exchanges) and even medical care. But there are still other details you must be aware of in order to make your international relocation a success. This chapter outlines some of those details and offers information about where to seek additional help once you arrive at your new home.

Before You Go

One major benefit of entering a foreign country as a military member is that you will be stationed with others who have recently relocated abroad. Sharing this experience with other families can be a bonding experience. People often say that they met their best friends while unpacking or waiting on line at the Relocation Office's loan closet. It can happen to you too!

Check with your Relocation Office for information about the base to which you will be relocated. Gather as much information as you can about the services offered on base and what you can expect in the vicinity. In addition, you may also wish to get information on:

- Types of stores (in addition to commissaries which may not stock all items you want) that stock goods or offer services for you and your family.
- Detailed information about the climate and current weather conditions at the time of departure.

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- Information about exchange rates and the currency honored in the country.
 - Information about driving requirements and licenses.
 - Information on appliance preparation (blow dryers, razors, etc.) as outlets and wattage differ depending upon the country.

Culture Shock... What's That?

When people go abroad they often talk about experiencing “culture shock” after the “honeymoon period.” The honeymoon period refers to the first few weeks following a move when people are excited about experiencing a new culture and country. Culture shock sets in when the excitement wears off and the differences become a chore to deal with day after day. Keep in mind that not all people experience a honeymoon period and some are stricken with culture shock almost as soon as they step off the airplane.

Common issues that evoke culture shock include:

- Sex roles: equality versus inequality of sexes.
- Religious customs and beliefs.
- Government styles: in the United States, we live in a democracy, while the governments in other countries might not be as democratic.
- Language: communication is both verbal and nonverbal so it's important to recognize differences beyond the language barrier.
- Pace of day-to-day life: slower in some countries, faster in others.
- Food selection: depends upon which part of the world you live in.
- Transportation: some countries are more industrialized than others.
- Cost and supply of goods: varies depending upon where you are stationed.

Coping with Culture Shock

The best way to conquer culture shock is to take action to learn about your new home. Some fun ways to learn about your new home and combat the effects of culture shock include:

- Become involved on base or in the local community (civic/worship/sports).
- Volunteer on base.
- Experiment by trying new foods and activities.
- Try and meet one new person a day.
- Keep a journal of your experiences.
- Find the lowest possible telephone rates and call a friend in the United States (or better yet, if you have a computer, try e-mail).

Some people do have a more difficult time than others with culture shock and may even experience mild physical symptoms. Contact your Family Support Center, or base physician if that seems to be the case. Symptoms include:

- Anxiety, dizziness, lightheadedness
- Fatigue
- Headaches, stomachaches
- Anger

School Information

In most cases, military dependents will attend a Department of Defense Dependents School (DoDDS). If your particular base does not house one of the more than 160 DoDDS overseas, the military ensures that one is available to your child at a nearby installation. These schools are open to elementary through high school students and children of active duty military members receive priority enrollment status.

For more information about DoDDS, you can contact your installation's education office or, if you have access to a computer you can use its web site at www.dodea.edu. You will find details about school locations, addresses, individual school web sites as well as reports on each school's academic ratings, test scores and district.

Once You Arrive

Though it can take a good six months for some family members to adjust to their new surroundings, one of the best ways to encourage a smooth transition starts with making your house feel like home. Many people wait a long time, or fail altogether, to decorate their home with personal belongings, though this tiny effort can produce some tremendous results.

Some military families view any relocation as temporary, so they never truly settle in. While it takes a little effort to hang pictures on the wall, to display family photos or to personalize their home, these small gestures go a long way in helping families to settle more quickly and easily.

Helping Children

Moving to a new school is difficult enough, but moving halfway around the world, away from family they know and love, can be tremendously stressful for children.

Parents should stress the benefits of an overseas move: the interesting people they will meet and the exotic places they will tour. Assure children that you understand any adjustment difficulties they might be having, but that you are confident that they will come to enjoy learning about and experiencing life in a new country.

To help children continue to confront difficult feelings that may arise about leaving the United States, it might help to have some pictures on hand to serve as reference points. The ability to see what is familiar often gives children a sense of comfort and safety while they are in the throes of adjusting to a new place. So keep pictures on hand of the following:

- Old home and military installation
- Friends and family
- Former school and teachers
- Landmarks or attractions of former city or state
- A favorite family spot back home

Other Details

Keep the following issues in mind to ensure a safe move overseas.

Transporting Medications

In some cases, you or someone in your family may require medication on a routine basis. Some medications that can be dispensed here in the United States only by a pharmacist are considered over-the-counter drugs in other countries and do not require a prescription. Likewise, some medications we can purchase without a prescription may be considered illegal in other countries. Be sure to check with your physician and with your Relocation Office on base to be certain that all medications you transport from the United States are legal and available in the country to which you are headed.

Laws

In the United States, the nationwide age for legal alcohol consumption is 21. However, in many countries, the same drinking age does not exist. This makes access to alcohol overseas much easier for adolescents. This can lead to problems without appropriate limits set by parents. Conversely, while alcohol consumption may be commonplace for young people in other countries around the world, penalties for illegal drug use can be more harsh than those in the United States. In some countries, possession of small, even minuscule, amounts of marijuana and other illegal drugs carry an automatic jail sentence—an unexpected consequence many teens may not regard as a serious threat until it happens. Talk these issues over with your children before you leave the United States to avoid potential problems.

After the Move:

Adjustments and Opportunities



Turning the Challenge of Moving into an Opportunity for Growth

Even though you've unpacked your last box and you're settled into your current living quarters, it may not feel like home . . . yet.

Making a house into a home goes beyond emptying your packing boxes and beautifying your physical surroundings. It includes finding a place within your new community that allows you to express yourself creatively, to share yourself with others, and to form unique and lasting relationships.

This chapter covers different ways in which military members and their families might carve a niche for themselves in a new community. It also offers tips on activities to do as a family that can provide a lasting source of enjoyment.

Developing a Support System When You First Move

The biggest thing people miss when they move into a new community is the familiarity of old friends. When we move we wish we could feel as comfortable with our new friends as quickly, and as deeply, as we did with the ones we left behind. This is especially true for children. We forget that it took time to develop those friendships too.

When you're new to an area it's important to make the first move and introduce yourself, no matter how uncomfortable it is. Newcomers believe that others should welcome us. But newcomers don't have to wait for others to make the first move. Start by reaching out to others, rather than waiting to be approached, and encourage your children, even the shyest ones, to do the same. Remember, in the military, you're not a newcomer for long because there is always someone newer to the community, to on-base housing, and to the way things operate on base, than you.

So why not:

- Knock on neighbors' doors to introduce yourself.
- Invite the children on your block or in your building over to watch a video or to play.
- Ask other newcomers over for dinner.

Daily Routines Help Set the Pace, Especially for Young People

Another thing we often miss most about our old home is the routine and familiarity of our day-to-day lives. In a new community, everything is different: the people (neighbors, classmates), places (school, library, grocery store, commissary) and customs (the way the teacher teaches, the way the coach talks to players). We may tend to shy away and keep our distance when things are different.

Establishing a routine as quickly as possible helps us to get used to differences by making them part of our day-to-day routine. A stable routine helps young people and adults alike incorporate changes more quickly.

A routine to establish with a child or teen might be:

- Mondays: Go to library after school to do homework; go to grocery store/commissary with Mom or Dad.
- Wednesdays: Volunteer at an animal shelter; play soccer; help prepare dinner.
- Fridays: Talk to teachers about assignments; make plans for weekend; invite friends over; select a video rental or movie to see.

Join In

Parents say it all the time to their kids, “Join a club, get involved, try out for something. It’s a great way to meet people.” But urging your children to participate in activities and join clubs simply isn’t enough. You’ll find that the best way to encourage them to participate is for you to find and join activities that interest you. This is called modeling, and it can have a very positive effect on children. So let your child see you volunteering for groups, participating in activities and reaching out to others. When your child sees you making the first move, even when you don’t especially feel like doing it, he or she will most likely be inspired to follow in your footsteps.

Some other tips include:

Take action—especially when you feel isolated

Feeling isolated and alone following a new move is natural, even if things appear to be going well. Minor setbacks and disappointments are to be expected, and most have less to do with the move than with the normal challenges of daily life. However, the tendency is to blame the move for all your problems. That’s why it’s important to remind kids that at times they also felt disappointed in their old homes and that the feeling will pass in time. Encourage them to pursue their goals by joining a sports team, trying out for the school play, or asking to take part in a social activity.

Encourage your child to do research

Encourage your child to question others about the school activities and to show interest in the things he or she likes to do. Enthusiasm is catching, and people tend to be drawn to others who show an interest and make an effort to learn. This goes for anything, from sports and hobbies to academics.

Invite your child to participate in activities with you

While it’s important to develop one’s own interests, there is a special bond that develops between parents and children when they take part in activities together. Select activities you both enjoy, and carve out time each week to share them together. This is a wonderful way to spend time together, and a great way to explore your new community as a family.

Putting Down Emotional Roots When You Know You Will Have to Relocate Again

Probably the hardest part of a military relocation is that you know it will happen again. Because of the transient nature of military life it may feel like a never-ending challenge to lay down roots in each of your new communities.

The old cliché, “Home is where the heart is,” holds true for military families. While you and your loved ones may find it difficult to grow attached to a particular city, military installation or apartment, you always have each other. The more you do to develop your family bond, no matter where you live, you’ll have a stronger and meaningful group.

Ways to help your family grow emotionally:

- Spend time together each day, before the day begins and in the evening.
- Talk about the day’s activities or problems.
- Set goals for activities to do together during free time.
- Share thoughts and feelings about the move.
- Create a family scrapbook of your experiences to refer to now and during future moves.

Efforts like these create a space of safety and belonging for all family members, especially in a new situation. If complaints come up, focus on finding a solution. Be patient with one another; everyone will adjust in their own time.

Where To Find More Information

The military provides a multitude of resources regarding PCSing through the Relocation Office located on most installations. In addition, Family Service Centers for Navy and Marine Corps, Family Support Centers for Air Force, Work-Life Staff for Coast Guard, or Army Community Service Centers for Army families can help with various concerns related to your move.

Notes